

Public Health Names New Office of Animal Welfare Leadership: Patricia Blevins to Join as Executive Director

Dover – The Division of Public Health (DPH) announced today the hiring of Patricia Blevins as the new Office of Animal Welfare (OAW) Director. Blevins, an animal advocate for many years and one of the strongest supporters for overhauling and improving the statewide animal welfare system, will join DPH on Jan. 30, 2017, as OAW executive director. Hetti Brown, the original executive director, resigned the position in December 2016 to move to the Midwest.

Blevins, while most well-known for her work as a state senator, has nearly 20 years-experience in managing personnel and agencies, including nine years as executive director of the Delaware Helpline and three years managing the Denison Branch of Girls, Inc. She also served on the Elsmere Town Council and as Mayor of Elsmere.

In 2012-2013, Blevins chaired the state Animal Welfare Task Force, which reviewed the effectiveness of animal control programs in Delaware, as well as examining strategies to increase spay/neuter programming and animal cruelty investigation and prosecutions. For background on the Task Force, visit <https://animalservices.delaware.gov/about/history>.

“We are so thrilled that Patti Blevins was willing to join us,” said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. “She has the combination of leadership, budget, and management experience, plus a deep knowledge about the Delaware animal system and its strengths and challenges that we need. We were sorry to lose

Hetti Brown and wanted to fill her shoes with someone who will continue to chart this new path. As one of the original architects of the constantly evolving animal welfare system, Blevins is the perfect replacement.”

Founded in 2013, the Office of Animal Welfare is committed to protecting the health, safety, and welfare of companion animals, and dedicated to promoting the human-animal bond in the state of Delaware. It offers a variety of programs and services, including:

- Spay and Neuter Services: Provides low-cost sterilization and free rabies vaccination to persons receiving public assistance. Residents of Delaware may apply at www.FixedandFab.com.
- Animal Shelter Oversight and Euthanasia Technician Certification: Conducts annual inspections of all animal shelters and investigations concerning possible violations of the Shelter Standards Law. To view inspection records or submit a complaint, visit dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/oaw/animalshelterstdoversight.html.
- Emergency Animal Sheltering and Disaster Response: A team of more than 100 volunteers, named the State Animal Response Team, assists with animal evacuation, emergency sheltering, search and rescue, and veterinary support during emergencies. To learn more about volunteering, visit dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/oaw/files/darflyer.pdf.
- Delaware Animal Services, 24-hour Hotline 302-255-4646: Provides animal control, rabies control, and cruelty enforcement statewide, administers the state dog licensing program, and manages the state Lost and Found Pet Registry. To learn more about DAS, visit Animal.Services.Delaware.gov.
- Animal Control and Cruelty Agent Certification: Regulates training and certification requirements for all persons acting as an Animal Welfare Officer in the

state, and conducts training for officers who wish to be certified.

- Delaware Animal License plate: The plate sells for a one-time fee of \$50, and \$35 of each sale is allocated to the Animal Welfare License Plate Fund. Revenue is used to provide spay and neuter surgeries for community cats, low-income pet owners, and to supplement spay and neuter funds for Delaware shelters and rescues.
- And more...

A list of OAW accomplishments to date include:

- Launched the first statewide animal control and cruelty enforcement unit, Delaware Animal Services (DAS), with a centralized case dispatch function. DAS receives and responds to more than 1,000 calls per month concerning stray, endangered, or abused animals.
- Created a statewide Lost and Found Pet Registry and licensing database to aid in reuniting owners with lost pets and tracking rabies vaccination and dog licensing records. To learn more, visit AnimalServices.Delaware.gov.
- Reformed the state emergency response and sheltering program for animals affected during disasters, and developed the State Animal Response Team.
- Implemented several critical updates to the State Spay & Neuter Program, including a statewide campaign with a website, online applications and easy payment options, and new grant program offered to nonprofit shelter and rescue groups. The number of clients served has doubled since implementation.
- Published regulations and developed an oversight function for the Shelter Standards Law. Now all shelters receive annual inspections and persons conducting euthanasia in shelters are state-certified.
- Developed state training and certification requirements for animal control officers and cruelty investigators.

- Hosted annual Delaware State Spay Days, providing free surgeries and rabies vaccinations to pet owners with low incomes.
- Launched the Second Chance Program, which teaches adjudicated youth how to train and handle sheltered dogs that need behavioral training before transitioning into their new homes
- Successfully advocated for new laws to prohibit animals from being left in vehicles in dangerous temperatures, increase adoption opportunities for animals seized in cruelty investigations, protect outdoor dogs in inclement weather, improve dangerous dog case management for a more fair and equitable process, and prohibit inhumane euthanasia procedures in animal shelters.

For further information on the DPH Office of Animal Welfare, visit <http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/oaw/oawhome.html>.

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, drink almost no sugary beverages.